

Tiverton, Rhode Island

“Looking Ahead and Planning Together”



Summary Materials for Public Hearing
Full text is also available for public review and/or copying
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All language is DRAFT only.

The Comprehensive Community Plan
2006 Update

The text of the plan elaborates on these concepts in the context of the goals, objectives and policies of the Tiverton Comprehensive Community Plan.

A Vision for Tiverton (Contained in Chapter 3 – Planning Concept)

- **Watershed Protection:** The protection of the sources of the town's water supply is a major concern. Protection areas should be reinforced around Stafford Pond and Nonquit Pond.
- **Residential Growth:** Future residential growth, while providing for affordable housing opportunities throughout town, should consist of greater density and varying housing styles in north Tiverton, and less dense and rural residential style developments in south Tiverton.
- **Commercial Area Refinement:** The utilization of the Main Road commercial area in north Tiverton should be improved by an active program of commercial revitalization. Other areas of commercial development should be inventoried and officially established. Development design standards should be prepared to improve the efficiency and appearance of the Main Road and other neighborhood commercial areas.
- **Rural Residential/Agriculture:** The rural character of south Tiverton should be preserved with low density residential, developed according to the principals of conservation design. Agricultural activities, which contribute to the economic base of this area, should be protected. The Farm, Forest and Open Space taxation program is an important tool to encourage the preservation of open space.
- **Contextual Development:** Compatible development which closely matches the existing historic and architectural fabric should be encouraged in all areas of town, particularly the areas of Stone Bridge, Nanaquaket, Puncateest/Fogland and Tiverton Four Corners. Techniques should be developed to encourage the preservation of existing buildings and to discourage demolition.
- **Industrial:** Land zoned for industrial uses should be developed in a high quality manner with adequate infrastructure and support services. Design guidelines should be produced for areas of commercial and industrial development.
- **Environmentally Sensitive Areas:** Environmentally sensitive areas are protected by state and federal regulatory systems. The town should monitor compliance as part of the subdivision review process.
- **Scenic Shoreline:** The natural features, beaches, cliffs and scenic vistas of the shorefront should be protected from over-development. Design standards to protect scenic values should be developed and included as a criterion for approval of developments.
- **Harbor Management:** The harbor management plan for the Tiverton Basin encourages the incorporation of water-dependent and related uses along waterfront land; supportive land-side regulations and available parking should be pursued at the same time as the necessary physical improvements to protect the basin.

Summary of Draft Language – Comprehensive Community Plan Update 2006

- **Town Center:** The town should develop a new municipal center which consolidates many of the municipal functions inadequately housed in the existing town hall and other buildings. The municipal center could incorporate a new town hall and library with public meeting space as well as a public safety complex. In 2004 the town completed the Tiverton Town Center Planning Study to guide the future development of underdeveloped land in the center of town.
- **Open Space Network:** A comprehensive open space plan should be developed which includes recreation areas, conservation areas, a scenic roadway system and a bike-hike system.
- **Visual Buffers:** The natural landscape along Route 24 should be preserved as a visual buffer from future development. A protective buffer should be established between residential and commercial uses.
- **Sewer Connections:** Sewer expansion should be restricted to existing developed areas of town where septic and cesspool systems are failing and where new individual sewage disposal systems (ISDS) are inappropriate because of soil type or lot size. Sewers should not be expanded merely to accommodate new subdivisions or the development of small lots that are not buildable due to ISDS constraints.
- **Gateways:** Special design consideration should be given for transitional areas into the community. Five such "gateway" areas are identified - two in north Tiverton and three at the Route 24 exits. Secondary gateway areas exist at Bulgarmarsh Road from Westport and on the Main Road from Little Compton.
- **Rail Right-of-way:** The existing rail right-of-way of the Newport and Old Colony Railroad should be preserved for future use as a transportation and infrastructure corridor.

Comprehensive Community Plan – Public Hearing Draft – 2006 Update
Goals, Objectives and Policies by Chapter

Chapter 1 – Introduction

No goals, objectives or policies identified.

Chapter 2 – Planning Background

No goals, objectives or policies identified.

Chapter 3 – Planning Concept

General Planning Goals

- Utilize the Comprehensive Community Plan as a guide to future growth and change within the town.
- Promote unity within the town and encourage continued community participation in decisions concerning future development.
- Preserve and protect the intimate scale and character of the town as qualities that provide a connection between the citizens and the businesses and government that serve them.

Chapter 4 – Natural and Cultural Resources

Goal

Preserve and protect the natural features and unique cultural qualities that contribute to the special character, identity, heritage and environmental quality of Tiverton.

Objectives

- Protect the rural character of the community, including agricultural activities, woodlands, physical elements of the rural landscape and the rural coastline.
- Protect those natural features that sustain the basic functions of the town, including high air quality, surface and groundwater, wetlands and coastal features.
- Preserve biological diversity and integrity through protection and management of state and federally-listed rare species habitat areas and ecologically significant natural communities, and through public education.
- Protect the environment from potential sources of contamination.
- Preserve and enhance the visual quality of the community and its natural beauty.
- Preserve the historic and architectural features and the special areas of the community that contribute to its unique character.

Policies

- Continue an active program of land acquisition to protect open space and rural character using the selection criteria described in the Open Space, Coastal Resources and Recreation Chapter. (Policy 1)
- Identify and develop an awareness and appreciation of elements of the rural character, such as farms, barns, open fields, stonewalls, mature trees, tree rows, and treed neighborhoods. (Policy 2)
- As development occurs, the Planning Board should work with developers to promote rural residential developments as the preferred type of development pattern, particularly in the town's rural and less developed areas. (Policy 3a.)
- To assist in the creation of high quality and well designed rural and conservation developments, the Planning Board shall use the services of professional design consultants to work with developers, as needed. (Policy 3b.)
- Promote local stewardship of the town's tree resources utilizing the Plan for Urban and Community Forestry (State Guide Plan Element 156, May 1999) as a reference. (Policy 4a.)
- Continue to require protection of existing significant trees and to specify replacement trees for new developments and subdivisions. (Policy 4b.)
- Establish a design review commission to assist the Planning Board in approving architectural designs for new commercial and mixed use development compatible with the town's historic and rural character. (Policy 5)
- Adopt specific design standards for new commercial and mixed use developments in town, including specific design guidelines and standards for the Tiverton Four Corners area. (Policy 6)
- Continue to identify natural and scenic vistas and apply standards for their protection as part of the development process. (Policy 7a.)
- Consider the establishment of a scenic roadways overlay district that includes standards for the protection of scenic defining features within important viewsheds. (Policy 7b.)
- Review procedures to identify and monitor underground storage tanks. Require UST operators to provide permit documentation as a condition of receiving an annual operating license. (Policy 8a.)
- Enforce existing regulations to prevent potential pollution from decaying vehicles in junkyards and other private properties in town. (Policy 8b.)

Summary of Draft Language – Comprehensive Community Plan Update 2006

- Establish a Stafford Pond Watershed Association that includes representatives of the water districts, town boards and commissions, residents and business people which have an interest in the watershed. (Policy 9a.)
- Request that the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management close the Stafford Pond boat ramp to gasoline powered craft. (Policy 9b.)
- Continue to monitor potential leachate contamination from the Tiverton landfill. (Policy 10)
- Preserve wetlands to protect groundwater recharge areas, control flooding and preserve wildlife habitats by ensuring compliance with the Rhode Island Freshwater Wetlands Act. (Policy 11)
- Update the Harbor Management Plan as necessary to ensure protection of environmentally sensitive areas, as required by the CRMC. (Policy 12)
- Define coastal scenic views and consider standards for their protection. (Policy 13)
- Enact and enforce the proposed amendments to the Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance as recommended in the Phase II Storm Water Management Plan. Continue enforcement of soil erosion and sediment control ordinance, using the Rhode Island Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Handbook. (Policy 14)
- Create an Historic Preservation Advisory Board that provides advice and assistance on preservation; identifies and provides plaques for historic homes and sites; and provides other education and outreach programs. (Policy 15)
- Solicit assistance from the RI Historical Preservation Commission to acquire funds to study the origins of the Eight Rod Way archeological remains and develop a protection strategy that correlates with the open space preservation effort described in the Open Space, Coastal Resources and Recreation Chapter. (Policy 16)
- Site plan and subdivision review procedures should continue to include an evaluation of potential archeological resources and possible provisions for their protection. (Policy 17)

Chapter 5 – Land Use Plan

Goal

Promote land use patterns that are consistent with natural resource constraints, are environmentally and economically sound, minimize incompatibility among uses, and preserve Tiverton's rural and small town character.

Objectives

- Utilize the land use plan to guide future growth and development, and serve as the basis for future regulatory actions.

Summary of Draft Language – Comprehensive Community Plan Update 2006

- Evaluate the effectiveness of current zoning district designations, particularly the appropriateness of the areas currently zoned for industrial and highway commercial uses.
- Promote marine related land uses within the non-residential zoning districts along the Tiverton waterfront.
- Support the diversification of the town tax base and increase in net tax revenue through non-residential development, including the development of the town industrial/technology park, in a manner that is compatible with and protects the predominantly rural, historic, maritime and small town character of Tiverton.
- Inventory and evaluate town-owned property to determine the use that promotes the long-term interests of the town.
- Ensure that town staffing is adequate to meet the complex planning and regulatory challenges required as development pressures increase.
- Ensure that utilities are extended and provided only in a manner that is compatible with desired rate and density of future development and done with consideration of aesthetic impacts.

Policies

- Ensure that the land use goal and specific visions for desirable future development, as stated in this Comprehensive Community Plan, are achievable with the zoning and subdivision regulations, and that these regulations remain relevant through periodic monitoring and review. (Policy 1)
- Evaluate the development potential of the vacant industrial property in town, and consider rezoning to allow uses that are compatible with the environment, the surrounding area and the small town character of Tiverton. (Policy 2)
- Evaluate the definition, allowable uses and dimensional requirements of the Highway Commercial District, and modify if necessary to be consistent with the land use goals and objectives of this Comprehensive Community Plan. (Policy 3)
- Evaluate the Village Commercial District to ensure that the unique identity of Tiverton Four Corners is preserved. (Policy 4a.)
- Consider the application of the village commercial zoning concept to other areas of the town as may be appropriate. (Policy 4b.)
- Follow-up on waterfront-related studies and design concepts with a comprehensive waterfront plan that evaluates long term options for development, improved aesthetics and public access. (Policy 5a.)

Summary of Draft Language – Comprehensive Community Plan Update 2006

- Complete improvements to the Stone Bridge area, including the expansion of Grinnell's Beach and Independence Park by exploring alternatives for acquiring and removing the gasoline station. (Policy 5b.)
- Support industrial and commercial uses that result in net tax revenue and desirable employment opportunities, and are compatible with the small town and rural character of the town. (Policy 6)
- Inventory and evaluate town-owned property to determine its best use based on the comprehensive plan. Review the inventory on a periodic basis as part of the capital planning process. (Policy 7)
- Establish a planning department with a full-time planner and staff that support the work of the Planning Board and works in conjunction with all town departments. (Policy 8)
- Allow the expansion of sewer and water utilities into areas of town that are not presently serviced only in a manner that is consistent with the desired land uses and densities as identified in this Comprehensive Community Plan. (Policy 9)
- Develop regulations with regard to the siting of utility and accessory structures, so that the design and operation of such utilities are consistent with the town's small town and rural character. (Policy 10)

Chapter 6 – Housing (Note: this chapter is unchanged – approved by the State 09/30/05)

Goal

Encourage a diversity of housing types that meet the needs of all segments of the population of Tiverton, while maintaining the character of the community.

Objectives

- Encourage the preservation of the existing housing stock.
- Identify and control the development of future residential areas to allow a mixture of housing types including those targeted to the elderly, those of low and moderate income and the disabled.
- Implement a plan to meet the state mandated 10% of housing units as low and moderate income by the year 2025 (See Section 6.7 of this Housing Chapter).

Policies

- Require developers of sites containing historic structures to consider plans that conserve these structures and complement them with new structures of compatible scale, design and building materials. (Policy 1)

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- Explore a broader range of permitted uses for large, older residential structures, including bed and breakfasts, and offices, subject to standards and controls which preserve the character of these areas and the architectural integrity of the structure. (Policy 2)
- Encourage the adaptive re-use of large historic structures as housing units in order to expand the availability of affordable housing while preserving the town's history and quality of place. (Policy 3)
- Investigate sources of seed money for a revolving loan fund to preserve historic and architecturally significant structures. (Policy 4)
- Strengthen and clarify zoning provisions that allow multi-family dwellings to encourage townhouses or condominium style developments as an alternative to single family developments in certain residential districts. (Policy 5)
- Evaluate zoning provisions that allow mixed use residential to ensure that providing a residential component in new commercial development is encouraged. (Policy 6)
- Require that all future multi-family developments present a plan that sets aside a minimum of 30% of the units as affordable (low and moderate). Continue to require that all single family developments present a plan that sets aside 20% of the units as affordable. (Policy 7)
- Adopt and enforce zoning ordinance requirements to allow the development of mixed-use town center and lifestyle center developments that require such developments to set aside a minimum of 30% of the housing units as affordable. (Policy 8)
- Work with the Church Community Housing Corporation and other entities to redevelop the Bourne Mill complex into a mixed use development that includes a significant number of affordable housing units. (Policy 9)
- Support the development of specialized residential compounds, such as artist colonies, which provide affordable housing options in the more rural portions of town. (Policy 10)
- Establish an Affordable Housing Commission to monitor and actively promote the development of affordable housing units in town. (Policy 11)
- Amend the Zoning Ordinance so that all comprehensive permit applications submitted to the Town of Tiverton are evaluated according to the goals and policies set forth in this component of the Housing Element of the Tiverton Comprehensive Community Plan. (Policy 12)

Chapter 7 – Services and Facilities

Goal

To provide community services and facilities which respond to the public safety, educational, governmental, infrastructure and informational needs of Tiverton’s residents in a timely, efficient and cost effective manner.

Objectives

- Define specific community facility and infrastructure needs attainable within the constraints of available resources, and assure adequate capital planning congruent with meeting these needs.
- Evaluate and improve mechanisms for efficient delivery of public safety services, including police, fire, ambulance and emergency management.
- Maintain and improve an effective educational system and library service.
- Preserve, maintain and improve reliable sources of high quality, affordable drinking water.
- Plan for a comprehensive wastewater management strategy that encompasses limited sewer expansions where needed, along with the establishment of wastewater management districts to regulate on-site sewage disposal systems.
- Improve the management, operation and administration of town services and facilities, including town offices, equipment and town owned property.
- Provide more effective mechanisms of communication between citizens and town government.

Policies

- Develop and annually update the five year capital plan for both facilities and equipment for the various town departments and ancillary services, including public safety, schools, library, water, public sewage and landfill management, which might be realized through taxes, bond issuance and state and federal funding, within the town’s financial capabilities. (Policy 1)
- Implement an impact fee ordinance and consider establishing an annual cap on building permits, to be imposed if needed. (Policy 2)
- Undertake a study of combining the police department and the present fire stations into a public safety complex in a suitable location in town. (Policy 3)
- Encourage the School Committee to monitor Planning Board proceedings for “new home starts” and property transfers for school enrollment potential. (Policy 4)

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- Encourage the School Committee to present an integrated, realistic and affordable annual budget, including the schedule of capital maintenance and replacement projects. (Policy 5a.)
- The Tiverton School Committee and the Department of Public Works should investigate the possibility of combining necessary buildings and grounds maintenance for potential cost savings. (Policy 5b.)
- Support the establishment of a new library with adequate facilities for current and future use. (Policy 6)
- Evaluate options for providing additional public meeting space in Tiverton, particularly for seniors and youth groups, and consider the best alternative use of all inactive school and other town buildings. (Policy 7)
- Consider options for the development of a modern municipal center, including the public safety complex, library, town governance and public meeting space. (Policy 8)
- Encourage the Stone Bridge and North Tiverton Fire Districts to present a single, town wide management plan, and require them to work in conjunction with the Planning Board in determining a measured expansion of public water so as to moderate development pressure in the town. (Policy 9a.)
- Consider the merger of the Stone Bridge and North Tiverton Fire Districts into a single water district serving the entire town. (Policy 9b.)
- Implement the On-Site Wastewater Management Ordinance on a town-wide basis so as to protect ground and surface water at a reasonable cost to property owners. (Policy 10)
- Amend the Town Charter to transfer the regulatory power of the Wastewater Management Commission to the Department of Public Works, and provide for a regular, perhaps part time, employee to oversee septic system requirements. (Policy 11)
- Include in the Sewers and Sewage Disposal Ordinance sufficient controls on sewer expansion so that residential growth is managed in accordance with the Tiverton Comprehensive Community Plan, and priority is given to those areas where on-site disposal is inadequate or failing, while ensuring that the total maximum flow capacity is not exceeded. (Policy 12)
- Require that any sewer expansion be supported by a complete financial plan, including costs and expenses, methods of financing improvements, and betterment assessments and user fees chargeable to individual property owners. (Policy 13)
- Provide funding to enable the town's existing Wastewater Facilities Plan to be updated and an engineering study of the Stafford Pond watershed to be conducted. (Policy 14)

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- Provide funding to establish and implement town-wide GIS mapping system to serve the town's planning, administrative and public service needs. (Policy 15)
- In addition to the town website, consider providing other forms of information dissemination, such as an annual citizens guide to town services and regulations, and the additional videotaping and televising of town meetings. (Policy 16)

Chapter 8 – Circulation

Goal

Provide for the safe and efficient management of automobile traffic while encouraging alternative forms of circulation that complement the community's special character and quality of place.

Objectives

- Implement design guidelines that assure safe and efficient access and egress to commercial establishments and housing subdivisions.
- Inventory town rights of way and platted, unimproved streets and roads, and determine their legal status.
- Encourage public transportation usage, including RIPTA commuter bus service.
- Encourage the provision of alternative forms of circulation, including bicycle, pedestrian and water transportation.

Policies

- Continue to review and update site plan review provisions for commercial development and residential subdivision regulations as they pertain to circulation and access. Review street design and construction standards, off-street parking requirements and other design standards. (Policy 1)
- Limit the construction of additional drive-through windows. (Policy 2)
- Conduct a comprehensive audit to determine legal status of streets in town, and maintain an updated "official street map" in Town Hall. This inventory should include platted, unimproved streets and roads. (Policy 3)
- Encourage increased use of RIPTA commuter services by evaluating and adjusting schedules to serve residents, and promote the availability of the services through greater publicity. (Policy 4)
- Develop a system of pedestrian and bike routes compatible with the safe use of the existing road system. (Policy 5)

Summary of Draft Language – Comprehensive Community Plan Update 2006

- Preserve the public right-of-way of the Newport and Old Colony Railway and evaluate the use of the line as part of a regional transportation plan, including pedestrian and bicycle access. (Policy 6)
- Maintain and update local priorities for local pedestrian, bicycle and roadway improvements based on the adopted Transportation Improvement Program. These priorities should be submitted for consideration in the state's biennial Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). (Policy 7)

Chapter 9 – Open Space, Coastal Resources and Recreation

Goal

Protect open space and coastal resources, and provide recreational opportunities for the citizens of Tiverton.

Objectives

- Pursue open space acquisition within a comprehensive strategy that establishes criteria and priorities, accounts for the differing needs and opportunities of the various regions of the town, and coordinates the efforts of both public and private entities.
- Protect Tiverton's farmland as valuable open space, as part of the town's cultural heritage, and as an important economic activity.
- Improve the quality and delivery of recreational programs and facilities.
- Update the Tiverton Recreation, Conservation and Open Space Plan along with a long-range capital program for its implementation.

Policies

- Pursue the preservation of open space using selection criteria and priorities as defined above. (Policy 1)
- The Open Space Commission will work with community groups and the Recreation Commission to identify sources of funding for acquiring open space in the more urbanized areas of Tiverton. (Policy 2)
- The town will coordinate closely with the Land Trust and other private organizations to ensure that both public and private monies are spent for the greatest benefit in preserving open space. (Policy 3)
- The Planning Board will require input from the Open Space Commission and the Conservation Commission in their review of proposed open space areas of Rural Residential Developments. (Policy 4)

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- Protect farmland through active involvement in funding programs that preserve land for agricultural use. (Policy 5)
- The Tiverton Harbor and Coastal Waters Management Commission shall continue efforts to reclaim, maintain and acquire more rights of way to the waterfront, and to include the construction of a residential boat ramp and fishing pier. (Policy 6)
- Preserve the public right-of-way of the Newport and Old Colony Railway for future recreational use, including pedestrian and bicycle use and waterfront access. (Policy 7)
- Update the Tiverton Recreation, Conservation and Open Space Plan and develop management plans for all town recreation and open space properties. (Policy 8)
- Consider development of a nature awareness program with a public education component that can be utilized as part of the school curriculum. (Policy 9)
- Examine expanding the utilization of School Department recreational facilities for public use. (Policy 10)
- Publish a town-wide map showing recreational and open space resources, picnic areas, trails and waterfront rights-of-ways. (Policy 11)
- Develop a long range plan to provide year round activities for older teens as part of a comprehensive recreation plan for all ages and population groups. (Policy 12)

Chapter 10 – Economic Development

Goal

Expand economic opportunities in Tiverton, and pursue and support forms of development that will maximize economic benefit while preserving and enhancing the environment and character of the town.

Objectives

- Ensure that the local zoning regulations accurately reflect the goals and desires as stated in the Comprehensive Community Plan for future commercial and industrial development, particularly in terms of location and categories and intensities of uses.
- Plan for and support only commercial and industrial development that provides net tax benefits and is at a scale and design that is consistent with the character of the town.
- Ensure that all new commercial and industrial development is well designed, aesthetically pleasing, compliments the character of the town and does not result in site and traffic impacts that adversely affect the character and quality of life of the town.
- Maximize the economic opportunities of the town industrial/technology park.

Summary of Draft Language – Comprehensive Community Plan Update 2006

- Encourage small business development and revitalization.
- Preserve and promote agricultural activities that maintain the rural character of Tiverton.
- Promote the utilization of Tiverton's waterfront for marine-related uses that would enhance the local economy and the town's maritime character.
- Promote and support the arts as an economic activity that enhances the quality of life in Tiverton.

Policies

- Evaluate the existing and potential uses of land zoned for commercial and industrial uses, and consider options for adjusting the land areas and intensity of uses so that future commercial and industrial development is compatible with the scale and character of the town. (Policy 1)
- Support and promote new retail commercial developments which primarily serve local needs. (Policy 2a.)
- Consider the development of a "Tiverton Town Center" that consists of a comprehensive mixed use development. (Policy 2b.)
- Adopt and apply building and site design standards for new commercial development and redevelopment in Tiverton. (Policy 3)
- Require fiscal impact analysis of commercial and mixed use developments to determine the impact on the town's tax revenue versus cost of services. (Policy 4)
- Promote the development of the industrial park for suitable light manufacturing, technology, office and associated uses. (Policy 5)
- Support the Small Business Association in assisting in the revitalization of businesses along Main Road in north Tiverton, and in other areas of the town. (Policy 6)
- Encourage businesses to benefit from the enterprise zone designation. (Policy 7)
- Evaluate zoning ordinance regulations addressing mixed uses and modify where needed to allow for the diversification and strengthening of the commercial areas in Tiverton. (Policy 8)
- Promote expansion of agricultural activities in the town through the efforts of the Small Business Association and the Eastern RI Conservation District. (Policy 9)
- Continue the use of tax alternatives/incentives that encourage preservation of agricultural land for farming use. (Policy 10)

Summary of Draft Language – Comprehensive Community Plan Update 2006

- Partake in regional planning for agricultural activity and support together with East Bay townships, southeast Massachusetts towns and state agencies. (Policy 11)
- Promote local fishing and marine related businesses by developing and rehabilitating appropriate support facilities. (Policy 12)
- Adopt a long term waterfront plan incorporating marine-related uses, particularly focusing on the area north of the Sakonnet River Bridge. (Policy 13)
- Support the artist community and promote the development of the arts as another form of economic activity. (Policy 14)

Chapter 11 – Tiverton Tomorrow

No goals, objectives or policies identified.

“Tiverton’s Agenda for Action” assigns responsibilities and identifies time frames for implementation of all policies contained within the Plan.